

## **Organisational Culture Of Care For Children In Disadvantaged Region - Experiences Of A Micro-Regional Research In Hungary**

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**ABSTRACT :** *Early childhood is a delicate period which means big physical, mental and emotional changes. Several researches proved that the high-quality of care provided in early childhood has big role in not only in the individual development, but in promoting social cohesion by the ability of breaking the cycle of disadvantage accumulation. In the recent period, throughout Europe, so in Hungary as well, more and more emphasis was put on the care for young children in order to reduce poverty and improve women's employment. Our fieldwork aimed to explore the practice of a disadvantaged micro-region in Hungary by learning their planning and organisational culture regarding care provided for children. In our research report, we present briefly the development directions of the care for children in Hungary, then sum the main experiences of the fieldwork done in the micro-region of Tét, highlighting why the examined practice of the micro-region could be a good model for the disadvantaged regions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Daytime care for young children, micro-regional developments, family day care*

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### **I. DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS OF DAY CARE FOR CHILDREN IN HUNGARY**

Arguments related to Children's Rights and to children's development strengthen the need of an investment in the education of children at early age. In the recent years, the attention has increased across Europe on those services and policies which aim to reduce child poverty and to promote women's employment and which result in striking balance between work and private life. (Korintus, 2012) 20% of Hungary's population of 10 million are children and 225 thousand children of this proportion (11% of the children population) are at risk. The rate of poverty in the total population is 9% and 13% among the families with children. In 2010, 560 000 children lived in a household where in the family the income per capita was below the 130% or 140% (single parent or children with disability or disease) the minimum pension. 11% of the pre-schoolers (37 000), 13,7% of the primary school pupils (106 000), 4% of the secondary school students (23 000) are multiply disadvantaged. (Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia, 2011: 30)

The promotion to have the disadvantaged children in poverty caught up can only be successful if the parents are involved and help it. The differences between the services' quality and the capacity mean a serious problem. It is also a serious problem that the services are less available where they are needed the most. Because of the shortcomings of the institutional and service system in Hungary the children do not get equal chance to access this good quality of cares which would be the best to meet their needs. In these places neither the parents get proper help to solve their problems regarding care, education, lifestyle and labour market, consequently, this dramatically reduces the social changes of the children living in poor family. Most of the nurseries closed after the political transformation, they mainly remained in big cities. Due to this, the nurseries' capacity for daytime care for children under 3 is really small, so only the 12,7% of them attend to nursery, and only 9% of the settlements have nurseries, they are typically in the cities. In addition, there is approximately 1000 family day care centres. A particular aim is to have 30% of the children to get day care. In order to enable the development of their skills of multiply disadvantaged children, including roma children, a Hungarian program was established which adapted the English Sure Start program, which was founded to ensure changes for those children under 5 years old, living in poverty, who do not have access to any service locally. By now 44 Sure Start Children's House work in the disadvantaged micro-regions using European Union sources. (Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia, 2011: 31-32)

The National Strategy for Closing the Gap formulated the following priorities for the period of 2011-2020 in terms of ensuring child welfare in accordance of the EU's objectives:

- The capacity need to be extended in the service deficient and capacity deficient settlements.
- The range of children in need who get free meals in school need be expanded.

- The parenting competencies need to be strengthened, the training and further trainings for those professionals who deal with the disadvantaged children and their families. (Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia 2011)

Taking these aims into account, we intend to define what kind of solutions can be found in the disadvantaged settlements in the field of providing proper quantity and quality of services for young children, promoting to the reducing of poverty and improving the women's employment.

## **II. CARE FOR CHILDREN IN THE MICRO-REGION OF TÉT – GOOD PRACTICE**

**Methodological background of the research :** 19 settlements belong to the micro-region of Tét and it has 19 000 inhabitants, they are underdeveloped and disadvantaged in terms of social-economic aspect. The group of settlements can be found in the south-east part of Győr-Moson-Sopron county in the West Transdanubia region. Among the 19 settlements, only Tét is city ranked its population is 4077 and has a smallholding village, Mérges (94 inhabitants). Five settlements have inhabitants between 100-500 people, these are the small villages of the micro-region: Árpás, Bodonhely, Kisbabet, Rábaszentmiklós and Sobor. There is only one settlement, Győrszemere, which has a population that reached 3000 in 2003. The proportion of the active population (16-60 years old) work is approximately 55%. The region is characterized by multi-sectoral economy nowadays, although agriculture still has crucial role. The service sector only appears through the vulnerable micro enterprises and self-employers, so the process of tertiarisation barely started, the growth of tourism is still to come. The nature of rural economy is well presented by the greatest amount of places typically connected to agricultural or processing its products. The economic and educational centre of the micro-region is Győr, 6500 employees and 2740 students commute to Győr daily which means that a quarter of those who go to Győr are from the micro region of Tét. (VÁTI, 2006)

**Alternative day-time care in the micro-region of Tét: family day care centre :** The child welfare services were available in every settlement in the micro-region, however, kindergartens were only in 13 settlement and only 2 settlements had a nursery. Alternative forms of day-time care (family day care centre) were missing, so the leaders of the micro-region's settlements have started to organise the day care for the children with common maintenance since 2007. By the common task performance, the day-time care for children is operating on a higher professional standard and the common maintenance is better solves as well as the material conditions.

Because of the collaboration on regional level, there are eight locations to ensure day-time care for a bigger proportion of children. These locations are family day care, established for different age groups. These are alternative and more adjusted to the parents' working hours and meet the legal requirements and the local characteristics better (than the nursery and the kindergarten care). The statutory task of the family day care is taking care of children who do not get nursery or kindergarten care and taking care of school-aged children over the school hours for not educational purpose. In case of children between 0-3, the games and playfulness get important role. In family day cares, in which the pre-school aged children attend (between 6 and 8 years old) activity, games and development through these get significant role. In the case of children between 7 and 14 years old, the main aim is helping them to study. The school-aged children only use the service afternoon on school days. Relaxation and preparing for study are the most effective if they are done playfully and with activities, for this the family day care provides tools and it also provides people to organise programs, supervise and coordinate. The unities operate with small number of participants (4-5-7 children), in the smallest unit they take care of disabled young children too. 50 children attend to and the total of the workers is 11. In the family day care centres it is an important aim to ensure the children get own experiences and sensitize them through tasks and games fitting to their age, additionally, they learn the games and tasks made for the socially disadvantaged children. During joint activities they try tasks not only the age-appropriated one but the equivalent school aged ones. The acquired experiences can help students to discover and awake consciousness regarding the developmental opportunities in the age-appropriated games, as well as, they can develop their communicative skills.

Thus the family day care can contribute to ease the transition from kindergarten to school, especially in the case of roma children. It is an important foundation that the professionals' and the parents' role interpretation should be close to the social reality. Holding educational aim and physical, mental development in mind, directives can be unfolded like the maintenance of natural need for movement, making them love moving, developing healthy lifestyle with regular exercise, developing the children's physical condition and fitness. (Téti Kistérség Sokoróaljai Önkormányzatának Gyermekjóléti és Szociális Intézményének szakmai programja – Tervezet, 2010)

**Evaluation organisational culture of day care for children :** The goal of the family day cares operating in the examined micro-region is providing age-appropriated daytime child-minding, care, education, meals and activities for children raised in family. The family day care tries to help families with special counselling, periodic child-minding and other services that help child rearing. According to the result of qualitative research, the establishment of family day care in the micro-region of Tét was without any antecedent since it is an organic developmental process. Basically the family day care's different function can be traced back to three kind of care: 1) child-minding in settlements where there is not nursery, kindergarten, 2) afternoon child-minding ran by civil organisation which provide day-care substitution child-minding for students who do not learn locally and 3) services ran by the child welfare system for children who wander or have behavioural problems.

One of the local characteristics is that the family day care is that they are not family homes; they are in the institutions owned by the council and operate in parallel with the original operations in these institutions. Actually, the family day cares were established and run presently within the framework of integration of institutions. One of its advantages is that it presents the decision-makers strong commitment to ensure care for children both on local and micro-region level. Organization of family day care for disabled children also indicates the commitment of the decision-makers. It is also important to point out that the inter-professional cooperation can become stronger by the integration of institutions which enables higher standard and quality of work, additionally the extension of formal relationships can enlarge the efficiency of warning system.

It is important to know the standard of care has two types in the micro-region of Tét. There is a service pack which satisfies the needs of a wealthy social group in stable position which group expects high standard of care and this group is willing to pay for this service pack. Also, there is a lower middle-class group which's income situation does not make it possible to pay for more expensive services. The residential needs are fully satisfied, but the long-term aim is to have this service to be provided in every settlements. The organisations performing nursery tasks have professional program which aim to promote the psychological, mental and intellectual development of the 2-3 years of children. The care is organized in governmental institutions for children in every care (nursery, kindergarten) where the terms and conditions are available to take care of children of this age. During the care of children of this age, the family day care has the advantage of having small groups like in nursery so the children get more attention and care. Organisations taking school responsibilities provide afternoon activities for children of school age. The advantage of the care is the flexible opening so it is more appropriate for the parents than the school's day-care. As for the interview, it can be mentioned positively that the relationships with the parents of the cared children are very good; the professionals give feedbacks regularly about the child's situations and extent of development.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Because of the professionals and decision-makers joint commitment and deliberation its long term social effects, the daytime care for children in the micro-region of Tét can be considered to be exemplary; and it can be told that as for care idealism it tries to respond changed labour market needs, family situations and individual needs of the children. At the same time we have to note that the family day care which are operated within the local government system – although they operated more flexibly compared to the classic bureaucratic institutions, and tried to adapt to parents' working hours – tend to be less flexible in the examined micro-region. The institution's opening hours, the parents working hours and the financial techniques on micro-region level result in a force to have the child in the family day care in full-time every day does not allow parents to use the services on regular basis only for a few hours a day or 1-2 days a week or only in the evenings. Overall, it can be told that the model of Tét is exemplary in two ways. Firstly, the view of the actors in the micro-region is exemplary because the decision-makers and the professionals consider the organisation and the operation of care provided for children to be important. During service provision, it is a top priority to rise the retain ability of the micro-region, that is, not to lose the children in long-term and to promote women's employment and to contribute the healthy development of the children or help them to overcome the possible disadvantages. Secondly, the family day care centres network of micro-region of Tét established in the recent years could allow in the future to have a unified image to be developed, to have the professional work to be developed on national level and have experiences to be shared in a wide range after processing the professional experiences accumulated during the operation of family day care.

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